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The Rites of Christian Initiation

J. R. CHANDRAN

Differences in the faith and practice among Churches relating to Christian initiation constitute some of the most difficult problems of the divided Church. There is no unanimity of opinion about the right mode of baptism, whether it should be by immersion, affusion or sprinkling. There is also a diversity of views about the rightness or otherwise of infant baptism. The relation between baptism and confirmation has been another matter of controversy. Underlying the different views are differences of understanding of the meaning of Christian initiation. The modern ecumenical and Church Union movements have created a fresh interest in the study of Christian initiation among both the 'Catholic' and the 'evangelical' Churches, not only with a view to greater mutual understanding and closer fellowship but also to a clearer understanding within each Church about the significance of the initiation rites.

Systematic instruction of the congregations on this question is also a great pastoral need today. One often discovers in India, and perhaps in other countries too, that many evangelists and catechists responsible for the instruction of village congregations have very little understanding of the sacraments. The result is that congregations easily fall prey to sectarian propaganda and many are disturbed in their minds about the need for re-baptism to be sure of their salvation.

Now, many books and articles have been written in recent times on baptism and confirmation; one of the most significant being the study by Professor G. W. H. Lampe.¹ While revealing the complexity of the problems involved, these studies also show that differences and agreements on the questions cut across confessional boundaries, as in the case of most theological issues today. The key to the understanding of the problems is the New Testament conception of membership in the Church.

This article does not attempt to solve any of the problems involved. It only seeks to state some views on the issues of Christian initiation. In addition to the books I have read on the subject I am also indebted to a discussion we had some time ago at a Faculty meeting of the United Theological College, Bangalore, on a questionnaire sent by the Liturgy Committee of the Church of South India.

Meaning of Baptism

Most non-Christian religions have initiation ceremonies, but no religion gives such depth of meaning as the New Testament gives to Christian Baptism.

¹ G. W. H. Lampe: *The Seal of the Spirit*. Longmans. 1951.

In order to understand the meaning of Christian Baptism, we should first look at the Jewish proselyte-baptism and the baptism of John. It has been shown that the proselyte-baptism among the Jews was symbolic of the passage of the Red Sea. ‘The converted stranger must enter the ‘promised land’ as Israel had done through water.’¹ In John’s baptism we see more than a mere repetition of proselyte-baptism. Professor Lampe has pointed out that John was more influenced by the teaching of the Old Testament prophets who called the people to repentance using the figures of washing, sprinkling of clean water and the like.² John’s warning about judgment and his reference to a future baptism with the Holy Spirit reflect some of the Jewish expectations based on prophetic teaching. ‘The baptism of John was an act of prophetic symbolism expressive of the cleansing of a faithful Remnant in preparation for the expected baptism of Spirit and fire in the Messianic Age.’³

The Christian baptism, according to the New Testament, is the symbolic expression of the fulfilment of the prophetic expectations and the dawning of the new age in Christ. The New Testament writers are all agreed that those who believe in Christ are constituted into a Community which participates in a life radically different from anything known by the Old Israel. ‘The least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist.’⁴ ‘The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.’⁵ ‘If a man is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.’⁶ Baptism is the symbol of the initiation into the new life. St. Paul speaks of baptism as incorporation into Christ, into His death and into His resurrection.⁷ Christ is the centre of the new life.

Now, while adopting baptism as the symbol of the initiation into the new age, the Christian Church was guided by the faith that the rite had received new content and meaning by the baptism of Jesus. Though it was the baptism of John which He received, He did not receive it in the same way as others. Others received the baptism for the remission of their sins. Jesus needed no remission of sins. By receiving the baptism He was identifying Himself with that section of sinful humanity which was seeking remission of sins. And that act was accompanied by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him, which is the *differentia* of Christian baptism from the baptism of John. The baptism of Jesus combines both water baptism and spirit baptism, symbolizing both the liberation from bondage to sin and the gift of the New Life.

The mystery of this *differentia* of the Christian baptism cannot be fully expressed by words. But some aspects of this mystery need to be emphasized. Matthew says that Jesus received John’s baptism in order ‘to fulfil all righteousness.’⁸ God’s righteousness is fulfilled in the forgiveness of sins and the redemption of man. Jesus’ baptism was for the redemption of all, and pre-figured His suffering and death, and the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all believers. Jesus’ identification with the solidarity of His people and the coming of the Holy Spirit are intimately related. Herein is also the mystery of the

¹ G. W. H. Lampe: op. cit. p. 24.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 26–32.

⁴ Mtt. 11:11.

⁶ 2 Cor. 5:17—cp. Eph. 2:10.

⁸ Mtt. 3:15—See O. Cullman: *Baptism in the New Testament*. S. C. M. Press. p. 18ff. W. F. Flemington: *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism*. p. 30ff. G. W. H. Lampe: op. cit. pp. 37ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵ John 1:17.

⁷ Rom. 6:3.

essential mission of the Holy Spirit, namely, the bringing together of *holiness* and *Koinonia*, which according to human notions are contrary to each other. Christian baptism is thus not merely an individual experience of the person baptized. The individual is certainly assured of the benefits of Jesus' baptism, but he also identifies himself with the whole company of believers and commits himself to a life of fellowship with them. There is no longer any room for self-righteousness. There is only the righteousness of Christ manifested by the power of the Holy Spirit in the fellowship of believers who own one another and bear one another's burdens. Every single Christian baptism is, therefore, an act of the whole Church. The Church receives the individual and the individual receives the Church, the Body of Christ. Even though baptism is not always accompanied by spectacular incidents like glossolalia, in so far as a person accepts the fellowship of the Church at baptism he is baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Another point that needs to be emphasized is that, in the New Testament, membership in the Church is described as a new covenant. The idea of the Covenant is the key to the Biblical understanding of man's relation to God. God has made a covenant with His people. In the Old Testament, the prophets teach that even when the people are faithless and go after other gods, Yahveh never breaks the covenant. He is always faithful and not only meets His people with judgment, but also redeems them showing love and mercy. The new covenant made with the blood of Christ is even more decisive than the old covenant. Baptism is the affirmation of this covenant and because of God's faithfulness it is an act performed once for all for each person. The only necessary character of the rite is the intention of incorporation into the Body of Christ, i.e. the Church, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Defects in the mode of baptism do not affect God's faithfulness. Any suggestion, therefore, of re-baptism means questioning God's faithfulness and amounts to blasphemy.

Infant Baptism and Believers' Baptism

In the conversations between Churches one of the major problems is created by the rejection of infant baptism by some confessions as contrary to the New Testament conception of Christian initiation.¹ Ecumenical discussions on the subject have not so far produced any agreed statement. The schemes for Church Union in Ceylon and in North India recognize both infant baptism and believers' baptism as equally valid practices in the United Church.

It is not easy to give any conclusive arguments from the New Testament for or against any one particular practice. Obviously, in the N.T. we come across only believers' baptism. This was the only possibility, because the Gospel was being preached for the first time and only those who believed could be baptized. It is not right to seek for evidence for infant baptism in the N.T. as some have done choosing one or two obscure passages. It is equally wrong to defend believers' baptism on the ground that infant baptism is not mentioned.

Those who insist on believers' baptism emphasize the conscious acceptance of Christ as a condition of baptism. Karl Barth argues that

¹ See 'More conversations between Lutherans, Baptists and the C.S.I.'—C.L.S. 1950. p. 22.

Baptism in the New Testament is a matter of the *cognitio* of salvation and as it is impossible for an infant to have knowledge of Christ's death and resurrection, infant baptism should be abandoned.¹ Those who reject infant baptism are right in their concern for avoiding the use of baptism as a magical or merely symbolic rite. But they are in danger of making baptism depend too much on the human response. In the New Testament baptism was not given as a reward of man's belief. On the contrary, it was an expression of God's objective gift of salvation to man and man's acceptance of that gift. Further, the rite will not become a purely magical rite as long as it is performed as a sacrament of the whole congregation which takes responsibility for the faith of the infant.

It should also be emphasized that baptism took place at the beginning of a man's Christian life and not at the culmination. In the case of children born to Christian parents it is difficult to say at what point his Christian faith begins, and so it is only proper to give baptism at infancy. It is the acceptance of the child's birth into the Christian household. Infant baptism is the symbolic or sacramental recognition of an objective fact. Quoting the evidence collected by J. Jeremias, Professor O. Cullmann points out that in the Judaism of N.T. times the children born to proselytes after they had been received were accepted as Israelites without the proselyte-baptism. It was, therefore, possible that the children of Christian parents were not baptized in later life.² It is, however, known that not long after the Apostolic Age infant baptism was regularly practised in the early Church. Writing in the second century, Tertullian speaks of the dangers of infant baptism and argues against it.³ His argument suggests that in his time infant baptism had been practised long enough to be abused.

While the practice of infant baptism is an effective way of safeguarding the objectivity of salvation in the Church, churches should also constantly remind themselves of the danger of the sacrament becoming a magical rite without real spiritual power. Infant baptism is meaningful only if the infant is really brought up in the environment of Christian faith. Either the parents or other sponsors representing the Church should take responsibility for the faith of the infants. Where one is not sure of such sponsorship, infant baptism should not be practised. Any policy in this matter should also be guided by the faith that if the infant is brought up in close touch with the fellowship of the Church, he will come within the influence of the Holy Spirit Who is not bound by our rules and regulations but works in different people in different ways according to their need.

Whether it be an infant or an adult who is baptized, what takes place is the initiation into the family of Christ. There is no real qualitative difference between the two. The view expressed by F. J. Leenhardt that infant baptism is fundamentally a different sacrament from adult baptism is not consistent with the New Testament.⁴ The difference lies only in the apprehensive powers of the recipients. An adult is capable of consciously responding to the work of the Holy Spirit; the infant is not capable of this. But it would be wrong to say that the Holy Spirit operates only in the adult. It is also wrong to think in terms of quantita-

¹ K. Barth: The Teaching of the Church regarding Baptism.

² O. Cullmann: op. cit. p. 25. G. W. H. Lampe: op. cit. p. 93.

³ On Baptism: Ch. 18.

⁴ O. Cullman: op. cit. p. 28-29.

tive reception of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is personal. Though there can be degrees of obedience to the Holy Spirit, it is not proper to think in terms of receiving the Holy Spirit in differing measures. The Holy Spirit works in all His fullness both in the infant and in the adult. Further, it is not any biological taint that is washed away at baptism. Baptism is rather the admission into a new environment and the beginning of a new life. One is brought to the realm of redemption where the Holy Spirit is operative. So there is only one theology of Baptism. The baptism of the believer is the norm and the basis for the theology of infant baptism as well.

Baptism and Confirmation

The Eastern Orthodox Churches regarded baptism as the sacrament of full initiation into the membership of the Church and did not separate the service of confirmation from the service of baptism. Any one who is baptized is baptized as a full member of the Church and can receive communion from the very beginning. The question of when a baptized member begins to join in communion is purely a matter of pastoral convenience. No theological significance is given to the time when a person receives his first Communion as distinct from the time of baptism.

In the West, however, the practice of infant baptism led to the institution of a separate service of confirmation. There is no uniform doctrine of confirmation even in the West. In the Catholic tradition, confirmation is by the laying on of hands by the Bishop, and it is at confirmation that one receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes a full member of the Church. Confirmation is sometimes spoken of as Spirit Baptism as distinct from the water baptism received in infancy. It has been described as *the seal of the Holy Spirit*. In the so-called Non-Conformist Churches there are services corresponding to confirmation for reception into full membership, but any ordained minister can 'receive the member.' They have no fixed doctrine of the relation between baptism and confirmation. The main question, however, with regard to confirmation is whether there is any justification for believing in a separate rite for the initial reception of the Holy Spirit other than Baptism.

Professor Lampe's study has thrown much valuable light on the development of the practice of confirmation. The following are his main conclusions:¹

1. There is no justification for the view held by some that a separate outward and visible ceremony other than water baptism was necessary in the same way as circumcision was necessary after proselyte baptism. Professor Cullmann shows that in the New Testament Baptism is the rite equivalent to the Jewish circumcision and that no other external rite was practised.²

2. In the early Church, Baptism, laying on of hands and the first communion were all integral parts of one rite. They were not separate services. Baptism and confirmation formed one united rite of Christian initiation.³

¹ Op. cit. pp. 306-322.

² Op. cit. pp. 57ff.

³ Professor F. L. Cross also emphasizes this point in his Introduction to St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on Christian Sacraments (London, S.P.C.K. 1951), pp. xxv, xxx-xxxii. For Cyril Baptism is the 'holy indissoluble seal' (Pro-catechesis, 16), and conveys to us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Mystagogical Catechesis, 20. 6).

3. At a relatively early date the ceremony of Baptism was 'embellished with various other symbolical actions', the most significant of them being chrismation, consignation and the laying on of hands. These were symbolic ways of expressing that 'in Baptism the believer is made a member of Christ and a sharer in His Messianic character.'

4. With the growth of the Church in numbers presbyteral Baptism was allowed, but the functions of consignation and laying on of hands were reserved by the Bishop. A doctrine of confirmation then developed to rationalize the division of the rite of initiation. At Baptism there is an initial gift of the Holy Spirit. At Confirmation is given the gift of the Spirit for strengthening and equipping for spiritual warfare. In the Catholic Church, confirmation began to be regarded as a separate sacrament. Sometimes Confirmation was regarded as a sacrament of even greater significance than Baptism.

5. The Reformers helped to restore the full and proper significance of Baptism as the sacrament of the bestowal of the Spirit. Confirmation came to be regarded as the 'means of supplying the response of faith which is required in Baptism, but cannot be made in the case of infants. The emphasis came to be laid increasingly upon the catechetical rather than the sacramental aspect of confirmation.'



On the basis of this study it should be concluded that Christian initiation should be regarded as a single event with a three-fold experience, viz. Conversion, Baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The separation of infant baptism from confirmation is a pure pastoral necessity without any serious theological significance. Confirmation is only a way of helping the person to apprehend the full meaning and implications of the Baptism he has received. In the case of adults, baptism and confirmation should not be separated but should be parts of the same service.



In saying this I am, of course, abandoning any pretence at speaking from a position of neutrality among the conflicting ecclesiologies with which we have to deal. I cannot so speak, for I believe that the divinely willed form of the Church's unity is at least this, a visible company in every place of all who confess Jesus as Lord, abiding together in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. Its foci are the word, the sacraments and the apostolic ministry. Its form is the visible fellowship, not of those whom we choose out to be our friends, but of those whom God has actually given to us as our neighbours. It is, therefore, simply humanity in every place re-created in Christ. It is the place where *all* men can be made one, because all are made nothing, where one new humanity in Christ is being daily renewed because the old man in *every* man is being brought to crucifixion through word, baptism and supper. Its unity is universal, because it is local and congregational.—Newbegin: *The Household of God*.

Christian Initiation

The Anglican Tradition

G. N. L. HALL

In the twenty-seventh of the 39 Articles of Religion Baptism is declared to be 'a sign of Regeneration or New Birth, whereby as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church.' This affirmation excludes any conception of its efficacy which is either (1) atomistic or (2) purely or primarily symbolic, let alone psychological.

1. It is fundamental to the Anglican conception of Baptism, as indeed of all the Sacraments, that it belongs to the Church, being part of the Church's corporate life and having its meaning within that corporate life. It is impossible to exaggerate the personal aspect of Baptism because by means of it each single individual recipient is brought into a permanent relation and living contact with God. Such individuals are nevertheless brought to God and receive His grace in order that they may be lively members of the Body of Christ and, as such, members one of another. The primary purpose of Christian initiation is thus to minister life to the Church through its members who by this divinely appointed sign are grafted into it: it is the initial means by which the Church, the Holy People of God itself, is made, extended, renewed, vivified and unified as the mystical Body of Christ, consisting of Head and members in one organic and coherent pattern of life to the glory of God the Father. And by this means also the whole treasury of the Church's noble ancestry is placed at the disposal of the individual believer: for by incorporation into the Church we are united not merely to the contemporary members of Christ's Body but to the whole company of Christ's people, living and departed.

It follows from this that the way to understand the rites of Christian initiation is to consider first their place in the corporate life of the Christian Society and to proceed from this to their value for the individual. To invert the process and to ask first what is the difference between a baptized person and an unbaptized is to confuse the problem in advance.

Such a method of procedure is consonant with the outlook of the New Testament to which the sharp distinction between Christ and the Church, which has been sometimes drawn in modern times, is entirely alien. The clearest and most impressive illustration in the New Testament of the corporate aspect of Baptism is the passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians (5:25-27) where St. Paul argues that the true relation of husband and wife is signified and represented in the relation between Christ and His Church. 'Christ', he says, 'loved the Church and gave Himself up for it: that he might sanctify it having cleansed it

with the washing of water by the word, that he might present the Church to himself, a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.' This is an ideal description whose perfect fulfilment is not to be looked for while the Church is still militant here on earth, but its truth does not belong only to the future. The Church is already a cleansed and consecrated society and to it, as a unity, applies not only the virtue of the Lord's sacrificial death, but the healing effect of the baptismal laver. The Apostle's language suggests something more than a succession of individual baptisms. He thinks of the unity between Christ and His Church as a unity which transcends and includes the many particular unities which exist between Christ and believers. It was entirely in keeping with such a conception that in an earlier chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians (4:5) he should enumerate as a cornerstone of the Church's unity the one baptism which equally with and inseparably from the one faith unites its members to its one Lord.

Article 27 derived the metaphor of grafting which it uses, and which is also echoed in the Anglican Baptismal service immediately after the actual baptism, from Romans 11. 17: there the Gentiles are compared to a wild olive grafted into the true olive, so as to be enriched by its life, the true olive being the Israel of God. This provides the context for understanding the consequences of baptism for the individual which in the Church Catechism are defined as 'a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.' Baptism involves a complete change of environment for the recipient, because it incorporates him into a society which owes its existence to the creative act of God. God made for Himself a people, Israel after the flesh, and afterwards remade it through the redemptive work of His Anointed so that it might be the body indwelt by the Spirit of the exalted Christ. But incorporation into this divine society involves more than a change of environment. For in that change the baptized person becomes other than he was before. In virtue of it he is united to Christ so that to the new environment corresponds the regenerate person.

In affirming this union of the baptized believer with Christ St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (6:3-11) shows at length by reference to the successive symbolic acts which have their place in the rite how we are buried with Him by baptism into death and share thereby in His resurrection, the reception of new life involving inescapably a death to the old. The thought is repeated in the Epistles to the Colossians (2:12, 3:1, 3) and to the Ephesians (2:5-6). The definition of the inward and Spiritual grace of baptism in the Catechism recalls the idea of assimilation to the death of Christ, but it is combined with the idea of new birth which is Petrine (1 Peter 1:23, 2:1) and Johannine (John 3:5) rather than Pauline. The association of baptism with a new birth seems to be absent from St. Paul's undoubtedly epistles in which there is nothing parallel to the phrase in Titus 3:5, 'the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' But the difference is more one of phraseology than of idea. For the many passages in which St. Paul speaks of a New Creation are closely parallel to the new birth of which St. Peter and St. John write. 'Whoever is in Christ, it is the new creation' (1 Cor. 5:17)—the new creation of which the Prophet spoke in the proclamation, 'Behold I create new heavens and a new earth' (Isaiah 65:17). For the new creation is not purely a future consummation but

is already in some degree anticipated in the Christian dispensation. The thought recurs in contexts which are explicitly baptismal where St. Paul compares the union of the Christian with Christ to the putting off of a garment—an analogy plainly suggested by the stripping off of clothes before baptism and the reclothing of the neophyte in a white robe. ‘As many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ’ (Gal. 3:27). ‘Put off the old man . . . Be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth’ (Ephes. 4:22–24; cf. also Ephes. 2:10 and Col. 3:10). Man’s salvation consists in a fresh act of creation whereby the outline of the original creation is restored and brought to fulfilment. By His self-oblation unto death Christ forged a new humanity which burst the bonds of the prison-house of death and this new nature, as the second Adam, he is able to impart to others (Cor. 15:22). The implication of the whole of the New Testament teaching on baptism is that it is the indispensable means which confers the capacity to share in this new created humanity of which Christ is the source, and that because thereby we become very members of His body incorporate in Him (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27).

2. In the twenty-seventh Article Baptism is declared to be a sign of Regeneration. ‘Sign’ is clearly used in the sense defined in article 25 where sacraments are affirmed to be ‘effectual signs of grace.’ It implies that baptism not only symbolizes new birth, but conveys it. Centuries of philosophical and theological discussion lay behind the terminology. It was St. Augustine who laid the foundations of sacramental theology as it developed in the West in an age when the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation were reaching their final formulation. The outcome of the distinctions and discriminations of the mediaeval schoolmen who developed the definitions which Augustine first formulated is embodied in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, where a sacrament is defined as ‘a thing apparent to the senses and having by God’s appointment the power not only of signifying but also of effecting holiness and righteousness.’ True to ordinary scholastic use the word is employed as meaning the outward and visible sign. Clear cut formulas of this character are not congenial to Eastern Christianity. The ancient Churches of the East accept the sacraments as ineffable mysteries by means of which there is effected an interpenetration of the Divine presence into our world and they lay great stress on the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying created things. Nevertheless Catholic orthodoxy, whether in East or West, is agreed in regarding sacramental grace as an invisible gift given in and through a visible sign which is consequently more than symbolical.

It would be altogether idle to attempt to discover in the language of the New Testament writers a precise doctrine of the relation of the outward to the inward such as is presupposed in the definitions of the confessional declarations of the Reformation period. It can be readily admitted that St. Paul’s description of Baptism as a death unto sin and a rising again unto life with the Risen Christ must have gained in impressiveness from the symbolism of immersion, but it does not follow from this that the expressions he uses are merely symbolical. They are not purely figurative, but look back to the Baptism of Jesus Himself in the River Jordan, which has been rediscovered by a group of modern scholars as the master-key

to the understanding of the origin and meaning of the Christian rite. The Fathers of a later age delighted to enlarge on the theme that by His immersion in the Jordan Jesus sanctified water 'for the mystical washing away of sin,' not to mention breaking the head of the dragon lurking in its waters (Psalm 74:13), of which St. Cyril of Jerusalem has a good deal to say: but the Baptism of Jesus had a deeper significance than this. It was a foreshadowing of His mission as the Son and Servant of God, dedicating Him to the task of reconciliation through suffering (cf. Mark 10:38, Luke 12:50, John 1:29-34), a task which was accomplished by His death, resurrection and ascension and the New Covenant inaugurated by these events. In that atoning work—a work of essentially prevenient and redundant grace—Christian Baptism no less than the Eucharist has its ground as the effective means of applying its benefits through faith to Christ's followers. It is very difficult to reconcile St. Paul's words with a doctrine of Baptism which interprets the rite simply as a symbol witnessing to something that had happened already or would happen at some future date; for the aorists he uses indicate that a definite spiritual event occurred in the life of the believer when he came up from the water. In fact, the teaching of the New Testament about Christian initiation is characterized throughout by a realism which implies a direct divine action on man. It has been mistakenly argued from this that Christian Sacramentalism was an importation from the Greek mysteries. But the sacraments of the New Covenant have no genealogical link with the pagan mysteries. In the Bible what is done to the body is regarded as done to the man, because man is not regarded in the Greek way, as an immortal spirit temporarily inhabiting a body, but as a creature compact of body and soul.

The connotation of the term sacrament became a subject of acute, and sometimes embittered, controversy in the Reformation period. The controversy was provoked by Zwingli who in strict accordance with classical usage, like the humanist he was, defined the term to mean a visible mark of allegiance and though not always consistent in his denials, would never allow that sacraments are more than mere signs. Hence the name of 'Sacramentaries' first given by Luther to him and his followers, the meaning of which is the exact contrary of the meaning of the term 'Sacramentalist.' Calvin adopted a mediating position attributing to sacraments what he called an obsignatory function. He and his followers looked upon them as seals or testimonies of the Divine grace, perhaps then and there, but perhaps also independently bestowed. 'A sacrament,' he said in his Institutes (IV. XIV. 1) 'is an external symbol by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of good will towards us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith.' In particular he denied that Baptism was the means whereby God conveys to the soul the grace of the Holy Ghost to form it again to newness of life and limited its efficacy to that of a sign and seal whereby God attests and ratifies His promise to bestow this blessing on the believing recipient. It has been contended that Article 27 was designed to countenance this attenuated conception of the efficacy of baptism. The contention gains a certain plausibility, because some of its phrases do seem to echo the language which Calvin used. It is for instance stated in it that 'the promises of the forgiveness of sin and our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed by baptism' and this can be construed to mean that the relation of outward to inward

is not regarded as that of cause to effect, but that of seal and promise. On this theory it would be necessary to interpret the phrase 'as by an instrument,' which occurs earlier in the Article, in the sense of a legal document conveying the possession of a property which will actually be transferred on attaining the age of majority. But the view cannot be reconciled with the language of Article 25 which is largely based on the confession of Augsburg. The Anglican Church is not concerned to deny the truth contained in the Calvinistic definition of a sacrament: it acknowledged that the sacraments are 'sure witnesses' as well as 'effectual signs' of the grace of God and reiterated the acknowledgement when it included in its Catechism the declaration that sacraments are 'a pledge to assure us' of spiritual grace as well as a means whereby we receive it. But on the issue which Zwingli precipitated it ranged itself with the Lutherans firmly on the side of Catholic tradition. Moreover, the obsignatory view of baptism renders almost meaningless much of the language of the Anglican service of Baptism, e.g. the words in which after the baptism we give thanks 'that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant by thy Holy Spirit.' Anglicans of the rank and file owe the obstinate conviction which they generally cherish that baptism conveys something more than a title to the divine grace largely to the fact that the original creator of Anglicanism was more of a liturgist than a theologian.

It follows from such a conception of the efficacy of the sacrament of baptism that it is in some sense causal. The actual terminology which Article 27 uses, 'as by an instrument,' comes near to committing the Anglican Communion to a theory of causality which the disciples of St. Thomas Aquinas championed. For among Latin theologians there has been much debate since the golden age of the schoolmen as to the precise mode of the causality of sacraments and seven centuries of perhaps over-subtle speculation have not sufficed to decide it. In all their speculations they have shown a truly fastidious jealousy for the recognition of grace as never anything less than God's self-impartation to man, which entirely refutes the charge that Catholic theology ascribes a magical character to the sacraments. So far from standing in their own right, the sacraments, according to Catholic theology, owe their whole meaning and power to Christ in His eternal Priesthood, who is alone the efficient cause of grace. In the middle ages there were two rival schools of opinion, distinguished by the keywords 'moral' and 'physical,' as to the mode of the causality of the sacraments. St. Bonaventura maintained that sacraments are 'occasional' causes of grace, i.e. divinely appointed occasions without which there is no assurance of grace being conferred. The theory was developed by Duns Scotus who conceived the relation between the outward sign and the inward grace as one of pre-established harmony resting upon the decree of God and, therefore, infallible. The other opinion is that which found favour, if not with Aquinas, at least with his disciples. It regards the sacraments as physical instruments of grace in the sense that the power of God flows through them and so elevates the material vehicle that it produces an effect of which, left to itself, it is quite incapable. Both theories bristle with difficulties, nevertheless, if the sacraments in general, and baptism in particular, are anything more than signs pointing as it were from a distance to grace which is really received through and on account of something else, neither can be pronounced unworthy attempts to grapple with

the mystery of the relation of the outward to the inward. It would be perhaps paradoxical to contend that an Anglican is debarred by the apparently Thomistic language of the article from holding the Scotist view.

Some Traditional Principles

Ranging itself, as it thus undoubtedly does, with what may be called the major hemisphere of Christendom in its doctrine of the efficacy of baptism, the Anglican Communion adheres to certain traditional principles both in its teaching and practice which challenge criticism from one quarter or another. I conclude by offering some comments on five of these.

I. Anglicanism assents to the belief universally held in the Church until the era of the Reformation that baptism is necessary to salvation, qualified, of course by the proviso, never questioned since St. Ambrose preached his famous sermon at the obsequies of Valentinian II, that the desire for baptism suffices in the case of a man whose desire is thwarted through no fault of his own. This was one of the chief issues on which in the Elizabethan age Anglican divines came into collision with the Puritans, who, to quote from the *Westminster Confession*, held that 'grace or salvation is not so inseparably annexed unto baptism that no person can be regenerated or saved without it.' One corollary of the conviction that baptism is indispensable was the reduction to a minimum of the essential qualifications requisite in one who was to administer the rite, so that baptism by a lay person in case of urgency was universally accepted as valid. Post Augustinian tradition in the West went even further than this and denied that any qualification whatever in the minister was absolutely requisite save that of intention ; provided there was the intention to do what the Church does, baptism performed by an unbaptized and unbelieving person was recognized and historical instances can be quoted of such baptisms being accepted by the Anglican Church. In the Elizabethan age controversy was focussed on the question 'whether there be any such necessity of baptism as that for the ministering thereof the common decent orders should be broken' : the Puritans objected to the rubric in the Prayer Book directing a private ministration of baptism when great need shall compel, as 'inferring a necessity over rigorous and extreme' and in particular regarded the administration of baptism by a woman as a nullity. Their contentions were refuted at length by Hooker with massive erudition in the fifth book of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, and finally discredited at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604.

An impugner of the doctrine would adopt very different and less easily assailable grounds in the present day. He would probably appeal to the example of loyal disciples of Christ like the Quakers who reject sacraments altogether as the most cogent argument against those who maintain that baptism is the necessary means of incorporation into the Body of Christ. And it must be frankly acknowledged that the problem created by the existence of unbaptized 'saints' does not admit of any facile solution. I do not think any Anglican would be ready with complete equanimity to consign a devout Quaker to the uncovenanted mercies of God, as if he were a pagan. Nevertheless, it can be said on the other side that the Quakers do treat with indifference an ordinance of the New Testament which the Church from the first has regarded as

vital. They now claim to have repudiated the sacraments of the Gospel in order to assert the sacramental mystery of all life, but in origin their rejection of sacraments was an outcome of the prejudice that created things are unworthy to be vehicles of a divine gift. Sacraments belong not to the order of nature but to the order of grace and the rejection of the sacramental principle springs ultimately from a type of spirituality which shrinks from the full implications of the Incarnation and refuses to allow that the material order can be used to subserve spiritual ends. Moreover, the true approach to a right understanding of the sacraments is to consider first their place in the corporate life of the Church and it is difficult to see how the Church could preserve its sacramental character at all, if it failed to maintain a sacrament of initiation into its membership.

2. The Anglican Church retained infant baptism contenting itself with recasting the rites it had inherited from an age when adult baptism was normal so as to make them more suitable for infants. It was, in fact, only as an afterthought that it provided in 1662 a form for the baptism of those of riper years. It has, of course, never for one moment taught a doctrine of baptismal regeneration which would lend any countenance to the idea that without subsequent faith baptism could avail to secure eternal life for the recipient on reaching an age when faith could be expected or that the grace received could operate fruitfully for the renewal of the soul without the personal surrender of the will in response to it. The stress which it lays on the responsibilities of godparents is proof both of its conviction that the grace bestowed on an unconscious infant needs to be claimed and used, if the potentialities it places at the command of the recipient are to come to fruition, and also of its concern that it shall be so used and claimed. But the retention of infant baptism, nevertheless, implies that its efficacy is in some degree immediate and not solely proleptic. The Anglican Church did not base a practice which can be neither proved nor disproved from the evidence of the New Testament on Apostolic tradition, as the early Church did, but defended it on the ground that 'it is most agreeable with the institution of Christ,' whose own example it quoted in its baptismal office as a warrant for believing that infants, who are at least personalities in germ, are capable of receiving spiritual blessing. Modern Anglicans would defend the practice on the ground that it is not only agreeable with the institution of Christ, but congruous with an invariable principle of God's dealing with the soul. Religion begins not with what we do for God, but with what God does for us. The good will of our Heavenly Father is not something which we can earn by so much repentance or faith or so many good works. His love and His gifts of grace are prior to the commandment to serve Him: privilege comes before responsibility. Nothing could be more scriptural. So viewed, baptism becomes a powerful moral lever encouraging men to follow after holiness: for, while heightening the gravity of sin in the baptized, the grace supplied is an assurance of inexhaustible aid to rise to the height of their calling.

No one acquainted with the conditions prevailing in the mission field would deny the immense advantage that the Church in those conditions owes to the perennial object lesson in the principles of an ethical sacramentalism afforded by the baptism of adult converts, demanding, as this does, not only the due performance of a sacred rite by the minister, but a right response of mind and will on the part of the

recipient publicly witnessed by the congregation of the faithful. But it ought to be recognized that the protest of the Anabaptists in the age of the Reformation that true baptism should always presuppose actual belief in the receivers and is otherwise no baptism, was a novelty. In the ancient Church those who objected to infant baptism did not oppose it on doctrinal grounds. The first known objector was Tertullian and the strong views he expressed on the subject were due to his belief that sin after baptism was either unforgivable (*de Pudicitia* 9) or, at least, exceedingly dangerous. This belief was fostered by the extreme rigour of the penitential system of the early Church and in the fourth century frequently led to the postponement of baptism until the approach of death. Convinced that baptism was the sovereign remedy for sin, people dreaded more the irremediable consequences of a lapse from grace after baptism than the risk of ultimately failing to receive it and held it in reserve for their last hours. But this practice did not express the mind of the Church which is, e.g. faithfully interpreted in the sermon of Gregory of Nyssa against those who postpone baptism.

3. In close association with the idea of regeneration Anglicanism affirms with the oecumenical creed that baptism is for the remission of sins. This clause of the Nicene Creed recalls and summarizes innumerable allusions in the New Testament which attest that the outward lustration of the body is not merely an expression of repentance but a means of inward purification and acceptance with God (Acts 2:38, 22:16, 1 Cor. 6:11, Ephes. 5:26f., 1 Peter 2:21, Rev. 7:14 and John 9:7 which is a clear allegory of baptism). Such language is entirely relevant to the adult candidates of whom it is used in the New Testament, but does its retention when administering baptism to infants, who *ex hypothesi* cannot have committed actual sins, necessarily presuppose the sombre logic of St. Augustine's doctrine of an hereditary taint involving guilt contracted by mankind through the fall of the first forefather of our race?

There is no question that the figment of 'original guilt' or 'guilt of nature' was developed partly as a solution of the difficulty caused by the apparent incongruity of administering a sacrament the declared and symbolized purpose of which was the washing away of sin at an age when the recipient was incapable of incurring personal guilt: but there is equally no question that this was a theological afterthought to justify a practice which had grown up spontaneously as a result of popular sentiment rather than of reasoned theory and in the course of time had received official recognition. All that the practice presupposes is the contrast between humanity as it is in Adam and humanity as it is in Christ, which St. Paul develops in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and the fifteenth of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Each individual is born into the world as a member of the natural order, as one more unit in the human race. And humanity as a whole and not merely in its individual members is deeply and radically involved in sinfulness. This fact is independent of any view we may take of the story of the fall in the third chapter of Genesis and it remains true whatever we may think of the various attempts which have been made to give it theological definition. We are free to argue about the degree to which heredity or environment has a share in it, but to deny it outright is only compatible with an altogether superficial rationalization of the fundamentally irrational mystery of evil. In triumphant opposition to the old humanity thus involved in sinfulness stands the new humanity

forged by the might of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and baptism is the door by which we enter within the circle of its redemptive influence and the new supernatural life which alone can restore us to spiritual health is imparted to us. An adult who comes to Baptism may be conscious of this profound contrast between the pre- and post-baptismal state, as was St. Cyprian in the classical passage in which he put his own experience on record (*de Gratia Dei* 1§ 4). But the contrast is there for everyone, adult or infant, who passes through the waters of baptism. It is a passage from the realm of nature to the realm of grace, and in the realm of grace the first necessary blessing is the forgiveness of sins.

The Church was conscious of this contrast long before Augustine gave it theological precision and emphasized the thought that baptism put an end to the long exile of the descendants of Adam and restored to them the lost paradise by the decorations customary in its earliest baptistries. The most ancient surviving example of a baptistry exists at Dura and dates from the third century. In the apse above the font a fresco representing Christ as the Good Shepherd leading His sheep is counterbalanced by another representing the fall of our first parents; and in another early baptistry at Naples the Good Shepherd is represented in repose surrounded by His flock in a paradisaical setting of trees and flowers and fountains. The contrast is further reinforced for Anglicans by the allusions which occur in the first prayer in the service of baptism to two other examples of the cycle of typology which, following Apostolic guidance (1 Cor. 10:2, 1 Peter 3:18-21, 2 Peter 2:5), taught the Christians of the primitive Church to see their own experience foreshadowed in acts of divine judgment and redemption narrated in the Old Testament—the Deluge and the Passage of the Red Sea. This prayer, derived not from a mediaeval source but from Luther, was remodelled by the hand of a master in the revision of 1552. In both the types the waters are not so much instruments of cleansing as of chastisement. The purging of the iniquity of the antediluvian world by the flood was for the early Christians a symbol of the annihilation of the old man in the sacred font and the sparing of just Noah to be the starting point of a new humanity a figure of the resurrection of Christ after his descent into the underworld to be the first born of the new creation to which we belong in virtue of our baptism. Similarly the passage of the Red Sea prefigured for them the victory of Christ over the powers of darkness accomplished at the season of the Passover by which mankind was liberated from thraldom to the tyranny of Satan: the type had a singular appropriateness in that age in view of the fact that it was during the Paschal vigil that baptism was normally conferred on the individual, so that in the observances of this culminating commemoration of the Christian year the mystery of redemption was set forth on the threefold plane of figure, reality and sacrament. Both types had a regular place in the catechetical instruction by which the significance of their initiation was expounded to the neophytes of the early Church during the Paschal octave, and we are learning again to appreciate the pastoral value of the ancient typology, as it is possible to lay such stress on the efficacy of the sacrament to the exclusion of any explanation of its meaning and symbolism that the rite itself tends to seem arbitrary and artificial.

4. The Anglican Church retained the rite of Episcopal Confirmation as in some sense the completion of Christian initiation and the normal qualification for entry on the full privileges of the Christian life as a communicant. This has proved itself to be a source both of theological embarrassment and pastoral enrichment to it.

Theological embarrassment arises from the fact that, whereas in the age of the Fathers baptism and confirmation were linked together in the framework of a single complex rite and the gift of the Holy Spirit normally ascribed to the final act of the rite, whether the laying on of hands was accomplished by unction or not, both the Anglican services and the teaching of Anglican divines have been profoundly influenced by a change of doctrine which developed in the mediaeval west, when the ancient liturgical pattern was cut into two halves and confirmation normally separated from baptism by an interval of years. The language of the service for infant baptism in the Book of Common Prayer implies unequivocally that Baptism is the occasion when the Holy Spirit is bestowed and is thus in line with the western mediaeval conception of it as a complete initiation. Nevertheless Anglican theology, as illustrated for instance by Jeremy Taylor's treatise *Khrisis Teleiotike*, and Anglican liturgical revision reveal a progressively increasing reluctance to discard altogether the initiatory aspect of confirmation and to treat it in accordance with the teaching of the mediaeval schoolmen and the Roman Church as an independent rite conferring an augmentation of grace from the Holy Spirit proper to growing years.

It must be acknowledged that when challenged by the question 'what mean ye by this service?' in regard to the rite of confirmation and its relation to Baptism, Anglicans have never been agreed as to what they should answer and this lack of agreement is amply illustrated by the debate on the subject which has been enlivening the Anglican Communion of recent years. The discussion is not solely a controversy between scholars and theologians, but has an important bearing on Anglican approaches to union with the Free Churches. For it is difficult to describe the relation between the two rites without either unduly minimizing the distinctive gift received in confirmation or appearing to unchurch the baptized Christian who remains unconfirmed. In point of fact, in the case of the only union between an Episcopal Church and non-Episcopal Churches which has yet been successfully launched, representative Anglicanism, as embodied in the Lambeth Conference of 1930, did not insist on Episcopal Confirmation as a pre-requisite term of union, but was content that its use should be commended in a footnote.

On the other hand, it cannot be said that lack of doctrinal precision has, in fact, tended to lower the dignity of Confirmation in the Anglican Church. On the contrary, its experience in ministering Confirmation in accordance with the provisions of the Prayer Book has enabled it to establish a practice which has to be reckoned a treasure of great price—a pastoral opportunity which has been forfeited alike by the Orthodox East through the conservatism which retains Chrism only as a feature of infant baptism and by the Roman West, thanks to the custom of administering confirmation at too young an age. This treasure the Church of the British Isles has passed on as part of its heritage to the world-wide fellowship of churches which looks to Canterbury as its focus.

One great gain has been secured by the emphasis in the Anglican service on the element of Ratification, present from the first but specially prominent since 1662 when an explicit renewal of their baptismal vows on the part of the candidates was inserted. The introduction of this feature into the service has been criticized as tending to detract from the importance of the divine activity in Confirmation, but it is essential to the Catholic interpretation of the sacraments to see in them divine acts which anticipate a response from the human side. There are many indications, of which the Collect for Easter Eve, first composed for the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637 and later included in the English Prayer Book after the Restoration, is one, that the compilers and revisers of that Book were haunted by the memory of the great Paschal Baptisms of the Ancient Church, when Christian initiation was normally imparted as the crown and consummation of a process of conscious faith in Jesus the Messiah, of repentance from sin and of conversion from idols to serve the living God. The renewal of vows at confirmation after systematic instruction outlined in the Church Catechism serves to supply in the case of those baptized in infancy just this element of conscious renunciation of the pagan world and adherence to Christ which is so conspicuous a feature in the theology of initiation in the New Testament and the adult baptisms of the early Church. At the same time it goes a long way to disarm the cavils and scruples of those who disapprove of infant baptism, because it excludes the possibility of such undeniably requisite response of faith and discipleship.

5. Finally, the Anglican Church adheres to the principle that Baptism creates the capacity to receive the other sacraments and grace-conveying ordinances of the Church. This may be illustrated by an example which has a peculiar relevance to the Church in India, in view of the increasing tendency in certain sections of the Christian community to contract mixed marriages. Christian marriage definitely presupposes that the parties to it are baptized and owes its sacramental character to the fact that they are. St. Paul in Ephesians 5:22-32 declares that the archetype of Christian marriage is the union between Christ and his bride, the Church, and unless the parties to a marriage have been sacramentally incorporated into the Body of Christ by baptism his words are emptied of all meaning. It is for this reason that an Anglican clergyman is forbidden to use more than the minimum portion of the marriage service necessary for a legal marriage when one of the parties to a marriage is an adherent of another Christian body who has not been baptized. By the same token a marriage contracted by two non-Christians, which before conversion may have been potentially polygamous or potentially dissoluble, is raised to the dignity of Christian marriage by virtue of the baptism of both parties to it and is thenceforth reckoned as exclusive and lifelong.



The man who tells the truth out of cynicism is a liar.

—D. Bonhoeffer : *Letters and Papers from Prison*.

Christian Initiation

Baptist Faith and Practice

W. G. WICKRAMASINGHE

Initiation is not essentially a Christian category of thought and expression, but rather owes its origin to the Greek Mysteries where the rites of initiation were associated with sacramental magic. The doctrine of initiation of any confession or denomination must necessarily be determined by the connotation ascribed to the term. If by initiation we mean the initial act or rite of introduction of an individual to the Christian Fellowship there need not be anything particularly sacramental about it. But if on the other hand initiation stands for the acceptance of a person as a full-fledged member of the Christian Church on the ground of his adherence to the Christian faith and his express wish to identify himself with the Christians, then the rites of initiation which mark this transition to a new sphere and new way of life are of tremendous significance both for the individual and the Church. In this article which seeks to present the Baptist faith and practice, initiation is understood as a responsible undertaking under God of both the individual and the church concerned. When does a person become a Christian, and when is he recognized as such by the Church ?

In setting forth the Baptist doctrine of initiation it may be customary to begin with the adult believer or inquirer seeking baptism. But this does not represent the actual practice in a large number of churches both in Great Britain and on the mission field, and tends to obscure the full significance of initiation as Baptists understand it. I shall have in mind particularly the situation as it obtains in Ceylon, and it may be safely assumed that diversity of practice is no indication of diversity of doctrine.

Initiation in Baptist doctrine and practice is not confined to one single event however significant the event may be. It is rather a process culminating in the two great Sacraments of the Church, viz. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Ceylon for people of Christian parents the beginning of initiation may be traced in customs that are observed not long after the child is born. It is not unusual for the minister to visit the expectant mother in hospital or nursing home (where nearly every child is born nowadays) to prepare her mentally and spiritually to wait peacefully upon God for the supreme gift of a new life. Before the mother and the child leave hospital the minister is expected to visit them again to offer prayers of thanksgiving and intercession. At this very early stage therefore in the life of the child, the parents and the minister representing the church pray that the child shall be brought within the sphere of divine grace.

The second landmark in the process of initiation is what is described as the Service of Dedication. A month or so later the parents bring

their child to the church and during the act of public worship on Sunday the congregation welcomes the child and offers praises to God. The church prays for God's blessings on the child, and the parents that they shall be endowed with God's grace to fulfil their responsibility as Christian parents. The church in turn is reminded of its responsibility that the life of the fellowship should be such as never to be a stumbling block to the growing child, and that the Christian upbringing of the child should be a co-operative adventure of the church and the parents. The minister finally takes the child in his arms and prays 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace.' The service of Dedication is most beautiful because it is the expression of the most natural response of parents to God in their joyful experience of being blessed and entrusted with the sacred trust of the gift of a child. Principal R. L. Child of Regent's Park College, Oxford, has very aptly described Dedication as 'the blessing of children and the dedication of parents'. Such a description brings out clearly the spiritual values Baptists wish to conserve in this rite.

The theological basis of such a Service of Dedication may seem contrary to the traditional Baptist view that a person must become a Christian, a Baptist, purely through personal choice. It is obviously true that this Service expresses the desire of the parents and the church that the child should become a Christian when he comes to the age of discretion. The child is brought up under all the Christian influences available, the Baptist church, Sunday school, and within the love and care of the Christian Fellowship. All these influences are believed to be means of God's grace to lead the child to understand His love and the truth revealed in Jesus Christ. But at no point is there in the life of the child any kind of coercion, and the fellowship of non-Baptists is not forbidden. Thus ultimately the individual is responsible for his decision to identify himself with the Baptists to live his Christian life of worship and witness in fellowship with them.

Two questions arise out of this presentation of the Service of Dedication, viz. what is the part that God is believed to play, and secondly, what is the status of the children of Baptist parents? We believe that there is no point or stage in human experience where God is not at work, whether such activity is consciously recognized or not. We believe that God accepts the praise of His people, and answers their prayers for Divine grace. The Service is a means of joy and blessing to the parents who acknowledge publicly that God is the giver of all good gifts. Baptists eschew any idea which suggests that anything miraculously happens to the child at this Service. The child is not engrafted into the membership of the Body of Christ in virtue of this rite, but he is brought within the love and care of the Fellowship, and as such he is entitled to its ministrations. According to the Baptist doctrine of the Church the infant cannot automatically be made a member of the Church. It is true, however, that the child regards himself as a Christian, and so is he regarded by his parents, society and the government for all practical purposes. The Theology of the Baptist position makes it impossible to regard the child as a Christian in the full sense of the term. In the life of the child the process of initiation has begun, and it is the prayer of the parents and the Church that he would grow up to

a personal recognition of the claims of Christ and so accept Him as his Saviour and Lord.

Baptism

The Sacrament of believers' baptism is the climax of the process of initiation. The Baptist doctrine of baptism and the practice of it is based fundamentally on an understanding of the New Testament and God's revelation as a personal encounter between God and man. Truth in the Bible, says Professor Emil Brunner, is always presented as something dynamic and personal. It is God's revelation of Himself and man's response to Him. God in Jesus Christ has not only revealed Himself as the God of love and grace, but He has brought to fulfilment His redemptive work. Christus Victor has gone the way of suffering and death on the cross. The darkest hour of human history is in God's infinite mercy the brightest hour, for it is the hour of redemption and hope. We agree with Professor Oscar Cullmann that Christ accomplished the great redemption, the once for all work of salvation, without the co-operation, and in spite of man, and in absolute independence of man's response of faith. But it is difficult to see the logic of his argument when he goes on to affirm that salvation becomes effective in man or rather is offered to man in entire independence of the decision of faith and understanding of those who benefit from it. The Baptist doctrine is that God's gift of forgiveness and the elevation of the repentant sinner to the status of a child of God, are miracles of God's grace offered freely to man which man can either accept or reject. The work of Christ becomes a reality in the experience of the believer as he consciously, deliberately and penitently opens his heart to the inflow of God's grace. None other could do this for him.

This marks the first stage which leads to believers' baptism. The person who has made this personal decision to follow Christ as Saviour and Lord in virtue of the apprehension of the Christian Gospel, is recognized as fulfilling the essential requirement for baptism. For some people this phase does not involve any radical change of belief such as occurs in the case of a person coming to Christianity from a non-Christian religion or from a life of secularism and flagrant sin. For those brought up in Christian homes and under the influence of the church the final self committal may be a natural process unaccompanied by anything spectacular or dramatic. In the final analysis Baptists do not make an absolute distinction between such a person and a non-Christian seeking baptism. The one has had the advantage of Christian influence and instruction in the faith, while the other comes from an entirely non-Christian environment. In the case of the latter the acceptance of Christ would involve a complete uprooting of himself morally and spiritually as he discovers that Christ makes all things new for him. The orientation and adjustments demanded of him will be a test of the sincerity of his profession. In the experience of both there is the initial awakening of human personality to the presence and the power of the divine and the subsequent self-abandonment to the working of the Holy Spirit in their life. It is imperative that this should be their personal individual experience in virtue of which they know in the depths of their own hearts that henceforth they are Christians, before others could so describe them with any justification.

On the request of such inquirers the Church addresses herself to the task of instructing them in the fundamentals of the Christian Faith, the meaning and significance of baptism and church membership. There is no prescribed or stereotyped course of instruction intended to be followed in all churches. The candidates are led to a deeper understanding of the Christian Gospel and to a realization of the implications of what it means to be a Christian. On the recommendation of the minister the church formally accepts the candidates as being ready for baptism. It is not unusual for the church to appoint two deacons to interview the candidates. The Sacrament of believers' baptism is administered during the worship on Sunday or at a Service specially arranged for the purpose. The candidate is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost on the profession of faith.

The question may be asked as to what constitutes the essence of baptism, and what is believed to happen as the candidate is immersed in the waters of baptism. It is true that moral and spiritual qualities observed in the candidate are not recognized in themselves as a sufficient qualification for church membership unless he takes the decisive step, baptism. Baptism, then in its essential nature is the symbolic representation of the inward spiritual experience, and the public testimony of a person that he has voluntarily, and on his own conviction and responsibility pledged himself unequivocally to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The believer in faith identifies himself with Christ on the cross, and as Christ died and rose again so the believer's death to sin and resurrection to newness of life is set forth in the full symbolism of immersion and the coming out of the waters of baptism. Faith is not subsequent to baptism as suggested by Oscar Cullmann, but faith which is man's response to God's saving grace is antecedent to and contemporaneous with baptism. This understanding of baptism rules out all ideas of sacramental magic and the magical potency of water as it was held by Tertullian.

It may seem that this description of the Baptist position suggests that the most significant act of initiation is something entirely human, something done by man for man. While it must be affirmed without compromise that man is not the passive object for whom God does something, it must be stated that it is God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ, and the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit which gives meaning to the Sacrament. We believe that God is present at Baptism to receive the worship of His people, to accept and ratify the pledge of the believer and endow him with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is the most staggering reality in the experience of the believer. As he looks back on his life he can now discern the Spirit's activity in every Christian influence which guided him to the moment of his baptism. He goes forth into the world in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit rejoicing in the assurance that God has received him into His fold.

The Church participating in the Sacrament has the central core of the Gospel enacted before them in the comprehensive symbolism of immersion. The Church in this Sacrament proclaims the death and resurrection (*the Kerygma*) of our Lord. This is the confessional value of believers' baptism.

The baptized believer now joins the congregation in the Service of the Lord's Supper. The believer in faith accepts the self oblation of Christ symbolized in the broken bread and the poured out wine as the efficient cause of his salvation, and by faith receives Christ into his heart.

The minister on behalf of the Church gives the right hand of fellowship and welcomes him into the Church. It is the more generally accepted view that acceptance of Christ also involves the acceptance of the fellowship of His people, and to be accepted by Christ, the Head, entails the acceptance by the Body, the Church. Baptism therefore is baptism into Christ and into His Church. It must be noted that there is nothing in Baptist polity to prevent a baptized believer seeking membership in a church of any other persuasion. Initiation is now complete, and the believer begins his active life of worship and witness as a responsible member of the Church.

This discussion is incomplete without reference being made to the Baptist position regarding those who have been initiated into the membership of non-Baptist churches by infant baptism but now seek membership in the Baptist Fellowship. The question of rebaptism is one that presents serious difficulty in present-day negotiations for church union. Looking at the problem independently of the issues of theological debate it can be affirmed categorically that Baptists believe in One Lord, One Faith and One Baptism. They take their stand on Scriptural basis and authority in their understanding and interpretation of the doctrine of Baptism. Baptists find it extremely difficult to subscribe to the view that the theological content and connotation envisaged by infant baptism is identical with the doctrine of baptism as set out in this paper. The problem is not solved by asserting that it is a matter of indifference whether one is baptized early or late into the death of Christ once and for all accomplished ; nor is the mode of baptism the differentia. Therefore theological consistency, intellectual honesty and integrity of conscience demand that they can accept no other baptism. It is exceedingly gratifying to realize that, when baptism is occupying the central place in theological discussion, some of the most eminent theologians of the day are in complete agreement with the fundamental position of Baptists. While scholars like Professor Oscar Cullmann attempt with great confidence to defend and uphold infant baptism, both Professor Karl Barth and Professor Emil Brunner have launched a vigorous and trenchant attack on it as theologically unsound and Scripturally unwarranted. Karl Barth says that 'the baptismal practice found in use on the basis of the teaching prevalent today is arbitrary and despotic'. Emil Brunner says that 'the contemporary practice of infant baptism can hardly be regarded as being short of scandalous'. I refer to these two theologians primarily because they are making explicit to the world with thoroughness of scholarship and soundness of New Testament exegesis some of the spiritual values and insights conserved in the Baptist tradition.

The modern theological scene is marked by a healthy disturbance of conscience and an uneasiness of mind. Some of the traditional assumptions of the Church and the theological basis of some of the rites of the Church are being questioned with a view to a right discernment of the will of God for His people as a worshipping and witnessing community.

Sloth¹

E. SAMBAYYA

Sloth is hardly a sin in India. Perhaps this is due to a general tendency to indolence among us! Sometimes sloth is induced by the strain of overwork coupled with poor health ; or by an unbalanced diet and unkindly weather, or by the restricted scope of rural life. But more frequently the prevailing philosophy of world-negation, or the fatalistic outlook engendered by belief in *Karma* and the resulting sense of futility is the cause. Like measles sloth is well-nigh universal though the factors which favour its prevalence are more clearly noticeable among the Indian people.

In the vast panorama of Indian thought it is the Epic philosophy which contains some references to sloth. Following the lead of *Samkhya* the Epic philosophy views sloth as a category of metaphysics rather than of ethics. As a part of the natural order man is made up of the three strands of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* in varying proportions. He in whom *Tamas* (which is variously rendered as dulness, darkness, grossness) predominates is styled a *Tāmasic* or slothful one. The *Gita* develops the doctrines of the *Gunas* more fully. ‘It is the *Guna* born of Prakriti that compels all creatures to act. Character and duty of a person depend upon the *Gunas*, and vary according to their proportion in each being’ (4:13 ; 14:5-18 ; 17:18). ‘For this my divine delusion of the strands is hard to pass ; those who take refuge in me pass beyond this delusion’ (7:14). The work of *Tamas* is described as: ‘That pleasure which in its beginning and in its consequence deludes the self, rising from sleep and sloth and heedlessness is declared to be of darkness’ (18:39). The *Mahabharata* describes *Tamas* as the quality of inertia or in man the spirit of stupor. It aims at satisfaction of senses. Its end is pleasure and its character ignorance.

The approach of Buddhism to sloth shows a certain emancipation from preoccupation with metaphysics. Indolence and laziness in spiritual struggle comes in for repeated denunciation in Buddhist writings. It is said of Mahamogallana that he had been assailed by torpor and sleepiness a week after his ordination. Therefore Buddha aroused him with the words ‘Mogallana, idleness is not the same as Aryan silence!’ One of the later *Nikayas* which deal with ethical matters says that an ideal monk is never lazy. Again sloth is mentioned as one of the five *Nivaranas* (or hindrances) to spiritual life. It is said to be caused by overeating and attachment of mind. But strangely enough sloth is never mentioned in the sixfold team of the foes of spirituality. The *arishadvarga* (the enemy team of six) comprises passion, wrath, meanness, lust, pride and malice. It is possible that there is an insufficient appreciation of sloth as an enemy of moral effort and spiritual culture in Indian thought (in general).

¹ I am indebted to the Bishop of Chota Nagpur for some of the ideas in this essay.

The Bible on the other hand takes a serious view of sloth. The Wisdom literature with its habitual emphasis on prudence describes sloth with devastating satire and great precision. ‘As a door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the sluggard upon his bed. He burieth his hand in the dish, it wearieth him to bring it again to his mouth’ (Prov. 26:14–16). ‘Go to the ant, thou sluggard’ (6:6). ‘I went by the field of the slothful . . . and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns. The face thereof was covered with nettles. And the stone wall thereof was broken down’ (24:30–31). Under its deadening influence the walls of virtue which we have reared with great labour begin to crumble down and passions clamour for satisfaction. The garden of the soul remains overgrown with bramble and thorn. ‘Be not slothful to go and to enter in to possess the land’ (Judg. 18:9). These words of Joshua to the children of Israel suggest that sloth robs one of initiative and the spirit of adventure. The three parables of judgment in the 25th chapter of S. Matthew are parables of omission with the implication that sloth is at the bottom of failure in each case. The servant who failed to invest his talent profitably received the rebuke ‘thou wicked and slothful servant’. In sundry places the Bible is punctuated with warnings against sluggishness.

Further, sloth contravenes the Biblical doctrine of work. Work in the routine sense is normal and fitting for man. ‘And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it’ (Gen. 2:15). The Psalmist speaks of work as the divine ordinance for the life of man when he says ‘man goeth forth unto work’ (Ps. 104:23). It is true that there is no command, ‘thou shalt not be idle’ but the command to rest on the Sabbath day includes ‘six days shalt thou labour’ (Exod. 20:9). If work is a curse at all it results from man’s rebellion against God’s good law. Our Lord accepted the ordinance of work and His last utterance was, ‘It is finished’. S. Paul sets us a lofty ideal of work when he says that we are fellow-workers with God (I Cor. 3:9). Thus God seeks the true happiness of man by laying on him the law of work. But the ambition of many nowadays is to do as little work as possible and have a good time. We look not to an eternity of idleness but to work which brings no fatigue. It is a mistake to regard heaven as a place of idleness. ‘His servants shall do him service.’ (Rev. 22:3). Very often sloth is inclination to idleness and apathy in action. Sometimes this morbid disposition may be due to ill health; but most frequently it is a disease of the will. The tendency to sloth is present in every one of us and hence we should detect it without delay so that it may not bring about our ruin. It is possible to be active externally and be slothful in spirit at the same time.

Types of Sloth

Sloth appears in a variety of forms: Bodily sloth is either sluggishness or laziness. It is a kind of Monday morning feeling which causes a man to take up his task reluctantly. The sluggard does not absolutely refuse to work but delays and postpones the accepted task. The lazy man on the other hand wants to do nothing which proves irksome. He has an aversion to all work. Thus in its crudest form sloth is bodily sin or a sinful disuse of the body. Without falling into sinful deeds men

can surrender themselves to the love of comfort that they become slaves of the body. The lazy man fails to perform his essential duty. This is very serious because men are created to serve God and fulfil their obligations to society and State. Therefore if without doing anything positive against the divine law we sit lazy we deserve the rebuke of our Lord 'why stand ye here idle all the day ?' (Mtt. 20:6). The barren fig tree by the mere fact of its being unfruitful, deserves to be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Mental and intellectual sloth manifests itself either as self-complacency or refusal to think and form one's own judgments. It is intellectual sloth which does not take the trouble to be informed about the Faith, and which passes under the name of tolerance in religion and morals. Unable to make moral decisions people get into the habit of drifting ; and herein lies the malignity of sloth. It undermines our strength of will and paralyses moral faculties.

Sloth is most dangerous when it attacks our spiritual life. The name for spiritual sloth is *accidie*. S. Thomas Aquinas calls *accidie* a kind of sadness in the face of some spiritual good which one has to achieve. This is the spiritual gloom and heaviness which kills devotion, takes life out of our prayer, implants distaste for spiritual things and renders the soul unhappy. The soul grows torpid at the thought of religious endeavour. The idea of right living inspires not joy but disgust because of its laboriousness. *Accidie* is also described as a sad dejection of the spirit in which a man feels out of sorts with God, with himself, and the world. It is acute universal boredom. It is boredom of things pertaining to God ; and when God wants to bring the soul to its eternal happiness it cries in disgust 'my soul loathes the means of grace, and is sick of this hard and stony pilgrimage'. As the soul is cut adrift from the highest love it is prone to every form of sin. *Accidie* is reckoned a root sin as it gives rise to many other sinful tendencies such as contempt of spiritual things, despair and renunciation of the highest good. Many middle aged clergy become casualties to *accidie* though it is not the malady of religious people only. The modern way of life presents us with many instances of this deepseated disease. The growing fear of hardship, failure to lay hold on eternal life, and the futile busy-ness of many moderns are some of the instances which come readily to mind. Very often the cause of spiritual sloth is the misconception of God's character who is ever calling us to co-operate with himself. This explains why 'the foolish virgins' fell asleep at the critical hour, and the 'goats' thought that they never saw our Lord in need. It is worthy of note that *accidie* is the special malady of middle-aged clergy who have lost the idealism of youth. Middle age is the period of greatest spiritual mortality. It is when we know that we know our work well that it bores us. Thus you get slothful clergy and backsliding laity. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to warn and encourage Christians who were tempted to apostatize owing to difficult external conditions. Ours is an age of indolence, and Bunyan's description of the Simple, the Slothful and the Presumptuous with fetters round their feet is a very apt description of many men of our age. The modern craze for pleasure arises from boredom and laziness. Also the deepseated reason that husband and wife have for not having children is the fear of having to work harder and put up with inconveniences. Thus sloth attacks us at every level of life and all through life.

Is there anything that we can do about it?

In combating this great evil it is necessary to approach it from a supernatural angle. We have to have a firm conviction that our end in life is to love God with all our heart and soul, our mind and strength; and thus only to save our soul. Sloth, it should be remembered, is omission or refusal to love God in this manner. It is necessary to think frequently of our Lord who challenges our sloth saying 'strive to enter the narrow gate', or 'what more are you doing, even the Gentiles do the same'. We must meditate on these words till they act like spurs in the side of our halfhearted effort and laziness. Or let us contemplate God as addressing us 'why stand ye here idle all day long; go and work in my vineyard'. The New Testament makes it quite clear that the Christian life is not vague sentimentalism but is in the nature of a pilgrimage 'with no abiding city here'; that it is a warfare, and a striving against great odds calling for constant vigilance.

Next, we must form strong convictions about the necessity of work. This is the lesson which our Lord wants us to learn from the barren fig tree. By earnest toil we must bring forth a harvest in our life. Sterile Christian life is indefensible. Even a rich man has to work inasmuch as God has endowed him with powers of body and mind. The toil of each is the service of all according to the universal law of Christian fellowship. It must be realized that there is no creature more wretched than an idle man, as the industry of an ant can readily teach us. Willing work slays sloth and brings happiness.

Sustained effort must be made to train the will remembering, that true devotion lies in the will but not in the feelings. The way to worship is prepared by amendment of life and self-discipline. The will must be made to co-operate with God when He puts good desires into our hearts. Under no circumstances should we capitulate to sloth and avoid participating in public worship, because in worship we are lifted up out of ourselves. It is only a sluggard who says 'there is a lion in the streets'. Therefore it is important that we should not exaggerate difficulties in life as it is a snare of sloth and cowardice. God demands that we should attempt great things for Him because he has given us a warrant for expecting great things from Him.

We must cultivate a sense of detachment towards certain habits which seek to bring us into captivity by restricting our freedom. S. John of the ladder in his treatise 'Scala paradise' interprets *accidie* as one of the offshoots of talkativeness. Too much talk dissipates the presence of God in the soul. It is a great help to recall frequently to mind a typical day in the life of our Lord,—a day in which work and worship are wisely blended, a day from which sloth and cowardice are banished. It is frequently necessary to contemplate the love of God which is active love. The love of God is the supreme motive which should encourage us to perseverance here and now. In the same way the vision and possession of God Himself is the great reward which will crown all drudgery and suffering which this involves.

Book Reviews

A Theologian on Natural Science

(Books by Prof. Karl Heim: *Christian Faith and Natural Science*, translated by N. Horton Smith; *The Transformation of the Scientific World View*, translated by W. A. Whitehouse. S.C.M. Press, 21/- each. Both available from the Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 5 Russell Street, Calcutta).

God Transcendent, the first volume of Prof. Karl Heim's great work *Glaube und Denken*, first appeared in its German form in 1931. Not all the succeeding volumes have appeared in English, but we have reason to be grateful to the S.C.M. for publishing these volumes (4 and 5 of the series) which show this tireless thinker pressing his enquiry into the realms of the most modern scientific thought. The final volume has now made its appearance in German under the title, *Weltschöpfung und Weltende*. It is to be hoped that it also will shortly appear in an English dress.

On page 29 of the first of these volumes, Dr. Heim says:

'The Church's future today depends more than ever on whether she withdraws into the ghetto and leaves the world to its fate or whether she has the authority to continue the discussion with the world outside and to answer the questions which it puts to her.'

Dr. Heim fears that the Church, instead of entering into a conversation with the world, may be satisfied to conduct a monologue with herself. Let it be said that at no time in his long career has Dr. Heim himself fallen victim to this danger. He has maintained that intimate contact with everyday reality which has equipped him to be a preacher whose sermons rallied a bewildered people after the defeat of 1918 and again in the nihilism which threatened after another debacle in 1945, and whose message of the transcendent power of God filled the *Stiftskirche* of Tübingen in the days of Adolf Hitler's threat to the Confessional Church and filled also his class-room with five hundred and more students of every Faculty in those days, to hear this Professor of Theology who spoke of the things which really endure.

This is the man who has now set himself the task of finding the language in which the Church can converse with the world, the scientific world of our day, and, though every scientist will not accept all that he has to say, he will at least understand the language and will know that Dr. Heim is speaking of things that are real.

The first of these volumes is more general in its intention than the second. Its aim is to find a 'Basis of discussion', a manner of speaking of the Christian faith which will be intelligible to a person of scientific training. This he does not by seeking to make religious truth something which can be 'demonstrated' by the methods of pure observation which are the technique of natural science, but by inviting the scientist to

recognize on his own ground the limitations of that technique and by pressing the questions which demand an answer, beyond those which mere observation of the objective world can supply.

We are confronted by facts such as the following: (1) Science itself has realized that there can be no observation of an objective world without an observer, but the observer is precisely the being which cannot be observed. Yet modern science is further than ever from being able to speak about the 'Thing in itself' the postulate of whose very existence is an act of faith. (2) That which can be observed is always that which *has happened*, and yet, as Dr. Heim says, the 'Now' is 'the red-hot forge where the future is to be hammered into shape'. It is the vital moment but it can never be observed; it can only be experienced. (3) Scientific study which has penetrated beyond the idea of dead matter into the thrilling world of nuclear physics has discovered a world like that described by Madame Curie: 'Seemingly rigid material is the scene of births, murderous clashes and acts of self-annihilation. It is the scene of life and death'.

In a world suggested by such facts as these, we cannot set aside the personal as irrelevant, and it is the personal which concerns the ultimate meaning of the whole. At this point Dr. Heim again introduces the suggestion worked out in his first volume, that the element of the personal may be understood by the category of a new *dimension*. He is at home in the conception of a multi-dimensional universe which has been so fruitful to the investigators of the theory of relativity, who can no longer think in terms of Euclidean space. Heim speaks of the conditions in which we normally live and work as those of 'polar space', that in which each point of time and space is defined by its relation to other points, and in which there is no unmoved point of reference from which all can be observed. Man is cast into this space-time continuum without anchorage, yet the deepest need of his being is to find an Archimedean point of security on which he can build rational meaningful life. The life and death question is that of deliverance from this polarity.

The only ways of deliverance that seem to present themselves are those of pure relativism, which reduces life to the frivolous and makes it a mockery, or of positivism in which man by his own deliberate decision chooses something contingent and makes it absolute, as the National Socialist chose to absolutize the German State. The answer to such titanism has invariably been that which was expressed long ago in Scripture in the casting down of the Tower of Babel.

Against this background Dr. Heim sets forth the Scriptural revelation which speaks of the Eternal God, the Creator, in whose hands are all things, who alone 'hath immortality', who is beyond our polar space. To express this truth in the language which he is using, Heim now speaks of God as a 'supra polar space'. He has introduced a new dimension which not only makes possible many of the things which were impossible in our polar existence, but which is delivered from the insoluble dilemma of all that is polar. God then is not a Being who is located on a Mount Olympus or a Kailash, but is the God of Psalm 139 who has beset us behind and before, the God also who is not confined to our time series but who is the same 'yesterday, today and forever'.

Towards the end of the volume Dr. Heim points to the Gospel record of Jesus Christ whose words are spoken with an authority which emerges from that ultimate point of repose at the heart of the universe, and who

brings to men the assurance that their life is not arbitrary, relative, meaningless, but is rather a commission entrusted to them from the Lord of all.

The Transformation of the Modern Scientific World View goes on to a more detailed study of the developments of science in various fields. The quest, however, remains the same, being concerned with the nature of God. Again we are reminded of the necessity for rational life that a man should find something in which he can place complete reliance. Luther is quoted as pointing out that this need of man is that which gives him always either God or an idol. From this starting point Dr. Heim refers us to certain absolutes in which men have in fact placed reliance, namely: the absolute object, absolute space and time, and absolute causality. He then shows how each of these in turn has been dissolved not by philosophical or theological argument but by the sheer compulsion of scientific investigation. To the materialist the 'absolute object', the eternity of matter, is the foundation of his faith, but today the scientist who has penetrated towards the inner secrets of the electrons can only say 'the world does not be, it becomes'. When we turn to space and time we see how the relentless advance of theory tested by observation has made the idea of absolutes inconceivable. Man has been driven from one point of reference to another—the solid earth, the central sun, the postulate of the ether—till finally no security remains! And absolute causality has gone. The optimistic suggestion of Laplace who was sure that a mind of sufficient ability, given full information about the situation in the universe, could forecast accurately every future event by the law of causality, has been shattered by the apparently arbitrary behaviour of the structure of the atom. Where is the mechanism which can explain why a particular radium atom should disintegrate now and not a thousand years hence, and why other radium atoms should *not* disintegrate now?

Dr. Heim sums up this analysis in these words:

'Each time we see a new variation on the same process by which the absolute raised against God by men is destroyed. The destruction is not achieved by apologetic methods practised by priests and philosophers in defence of their dogmas. The altars built by men as their places of devotion are demolished from within by the process of discovery which goes forward irresistibly to embrace new aspects of reality' (p. 152).

Before he draws his final conclusions, Dr. Heim turns our attention to 'the Riddle of Life' quoting from the realm of biology some astounding examples of the life-cycle—for example the story of the *sitaris beetle*—which make any mechanistic theory of evolution and the old adage *natura non facit saltus* completely untenable and remind us that the word 'instinct' is but our symbol 'x' to point to mysteries utterly beyond our understanding.

This study is not put forward as a claim to prove the being or existence of God but it is the context in which Dr. Heim again reminds us of the nature of the biblical faith. This is the world in which the Lord Jesus meets us with His serene confidence that even the fall of the sparrow does not happen without the Father. How striking is this fact that Jesus does not point to the abnormal or spectacular to illustrate the omnipotence of God but to the most insignificant events. The modern parallel, which Dr. Heim suggests, is that there is not a quantum jump without the Father. In the face of the problem of life, the faith of the

Lord Jesus assures us that we have not received our life from the hands of an impersonal 'It' but rather that it is a commission from Him in whom the life lines of all His creatures intersect. This gives to it its meaning and its purpose and responsibility.

Readers of Dr. Heim's books should be prepared for certain lines of thought which they may find strange. For instance, in vol. 4, he suggests a universality not only of life but of consciousness which many will find it hard to accept. Again, his awareness of the mystery of evil leads to a stress on the 'demonic' which a sophisticated world thought it had outgrown till some of the horrors of modern division and warfare came to make it not quite so sure. Again in a book which ranges over such a vast field of scientific knowledge, in which progress of study is unceasing, it is not to be expected that every statement will go unchallenged. These facts, however, do not detract from the truly magnificent achievement of a theologian who has shown such ability to master these varied subjects and who has had the patience and the humility to labour so long to understand what the scientists of today have to tell us. Any of these who read this book must at least recognize that here is a writer who has taken them seriously and who seeks to speak their language. It is to be hoped that they will have the patience to return the compliment and to recognize that when he also calls upon the work of philosophers he is still talking intelligible sense, and above all that when he propounds in this context the Christian faith he has not retreated into obscurantism but is saying something profoundly relevant to the world in which we dwell.

This article has barely scratched the surface of the work done in these weighty books. The universities of India today find students pressing more and more into their science faculties, and Christian thought which does not reckon with this fact will be more and more isolated from the thinking of the rising generation. We too must carry on a dialogue with this world. The translators have succeeded to a remarkable degree in reproducing the clarity of Prof. Heim's style, and when we turn his pages we cannot but be grateful that to prepare us for this dialogue we are offered such guidance as these books contain.

W. S.

La Papauté et les Missions au Cours des six Premiers Siècles ; Méthodologie antique et orientations modernes, par And. V. Seumois, O.M.I., M.A., Docteur en Missiologie, 1953. Eglise Vivante, Paris and Louvain.

This study by a distinguished exponent of the science of missions serving in Canada contains much more than the title leads the reader to expect on first opening the book. It falls into two parts and the historical analysis which occupies the first part is in the nature of an introduction to the principles of missionary action which the author develops in the concluding section. His thesis is, in fact, an eloquent plea supported by a superabundant wealth of documents for a return to what he claims to be the authentic missionary policy of the Papacy, the neglect of which during long centuries has resulted in establishing alien religious colonies of Mediterranean Christianity in Asia, Africa and the Western hemisphere rather than in planting branches of the Universal Church fully acclimatized to their environment. In support of this thesis he can appeal to

certain pronouncements of recent occupants of the chair of St. Peter which have affirmed with a startling lack of ambiguity the obligation which rests upon the agents of the Church's mission so to accommodate their presentation of the Christian religion to the diverse races of mankind that all His regenerate children may be at home in the household of God. The challenge was abruptly summarized by Cardinal Constantini when secretary of the Sacred Congregation *de propaganda fide*: 'Let us ask what tactics the missionaries of the apostolic and post-apostolic age followed: do we employ the same methods? The methods we follow are totally different: they seem to us more perfect, but after four centuries of experience they have proved themselves all but sterile.'

The Roman tradition that St. Peter was the first Pope enables Fr. Seumois to begin his historical investigation with the Apostles. As he notes, the missionary character of the Prince of Apostles has been overshadowed by the vocation of St. Paul. The chapter in which he seeks to supply this deficiency concludes with an illuminating discussion of the clash which occurred between the two Apostles at Antioch as typifying the inevitable tension which arises when concern for the Church's unity comes into collision with concern for its universality. Subsequent chapters survey the very scanty evidence of missionary activity on the part of the early Bishops of Rome,—the author is too good an historian to give any credence to legend—and there is a judicious examination of those elements in the theology of St. Leo the Great which are relevant to the missionary vocation of the Church. One of his immediate predecessors, Innocent I, by his insistence on conformity to Roman usages in his dealings with other churches of the West foreshadows the Papal monarchy of the Middle Ages.

During the closing years of the 6th century the Papacy in the person of Gregory the Great assumed the direction of the Church's missionary activity. By organizing the mission of St. Augustine to the Anglo-Saxons Pope Gregory inaugurated a new era in which the Church of Rome became the headquarters of Christian missions. For the spiritual conquest of the English nation not only marked the beginning of the missionary labours of the Benedictine Order, but the Anglo-Saxon Church repaid the debt she owed to Rome a century later by sending a host of zealous evangelists to the continent who organized the churches they planted in dependence on the Holy See. But this by no manner of means exhausts the significance of Gregory as the first of the great missionary Popes. He watched with minute and paternal solicitude over the progress of the mission and displayed a large-hearted tolerance in the instructions he gave St. Augustine, bidding him when perplexed by the diversity of rites he found in the course of his travels prevailing among those who professed the same faith as his home-church to select from these whatever seemed best adapted to the mentality of his converts and even directing him to wean them from idolatry by transforming the pagan sacrifices into Christian observances and vowing the ancient sanctuaries to the worship of the true God. Fr. Seumois is at pains to show that Gregory was led to enunciate these maxims not in a spirit of opportunism but by pondering such passages of scripture as Leviticus 17:1-7 and by his insight into human motive. In virtue of these oft-quoted directions, to which Anglicans have not infrequently appealed as a justification for their existence, echoed as they seem to be in Article XXXIV, he acclaims the great Pope as one of the most outstanding exponents of the authentic

missionary policy of the Papacy, ‘un phare d’une exceptionnelle puissance dans le domaine de la missiologie’.

Gregory excelled as a practical theologian: his writings were probably more widely read during the Middle Ages even than those of his master, Augustine. But many factors militated against his plea for freedom of local development receiving due attention—the wholesale conversions of the Middle Ages due to the intervention of the secular arm, the influence of the Canon Law in favour of uniformity, the chief blame for which Fr. Seumois fastens on the False Decretals, and later the imperialism of the Iberian powers during the period of colonization. In his last three chapters the author develops at length the argument for a return to the policy of the ancient Papacy so as to enable the Church to adjust itself to the situation which confronts it in the modern world in the fulfilment of its apostolic vocation untrammelled by the crippling tyranny of tradition. He confines himself to a detailed examination of three points which he urges have hitherto been too widely ignored—Canonical Flexibility, Liturgical Adaptation and the Baptism of Indigenous Values—and adduces an impressive array of historical precedents in support of his thesis. For in its direction of the Church’s mission the Papacy has never entirely yielded to the inveterate tendency to latinize the churches of its obedience: well-known instances of such latitude are the official sanction accorded to the liturgical use of Slavonic in Moravia in the 9th century, of Mongolian in China in the 14th and of literary Chinese in the 17th and Fr. Seumois quotes the less well-known instance of the permission granted to the Carmelite missionaries in Persia to celebrate mass in Arabic. These last two examples belong to the age in which the Propaganda was established. In its early years the congregation issued statesmanlike instructions on the respect due to national cultures and customs in the work of propagating the faith, but a variety of causes combined to defeat these enlightened counsels and they were finally abandoned during the acrimonious controversy about the rites which agitated the missionary outposts of the Church in Asia at the beginning of the 18th century. The author’s argument is further reinforced by quoting the judgment of non-Roman critics like Dr. K. S. Latourette and the testimony of missionaries in the field and indigenous Christians to the obstacles which the faith encounters through the exotic guise in which it is presented.

The theme of this book is one that is highly relevant to the situation which confronts the Church in India at the present juncture. The achievement of political independence inevitably impresses on Christians the need to emphasize the uniqueness of the religion they profess. For though the Indian republic has given its assent to liberty of conscience, there is no gainsaying that the national culture is largely under the influence of one dominating religion. And there are already signs that the demand that Christianity should express its faith and worship in an idiom more congenial to the people of India is becoming less aggressive and more discriminating. It is perhaps significant that Fr. Seumois derives a not inconsiderable part of the evidence he urges in support of his thesis from the experience of the Church in China. He makes no allusion to the leniency which Roman missionaries were not alone in displaying towards Caste in South India in the 18th century and this is perhaps the most conspicuous warning against the perils inherent in a policy of accommodation. The problem of acclimatization is indeed

highly complex. It is not improbable that in India in the years to come it will hinge on two questions to which Fr. Seumois alludes incidentally in the course of his argument. The first is a practical perplexity of conscience, namely what degree of concession in regard to attendance at the public and private ceremonies of their non-Christian fellow countrymen is legitimate for Christians in a country where the sacred and the social are so intimately fused ? There are not a few outside the Roman allegiance who regard with grave misgiving the authorizations granted to Japanese and Chinese members of the Roman Church to participate in State Shinto rites and ceremonies in honour of Confucius and departed ancestors. The other question concerns the Church's evangelistic approach to the cultured classes. Fr. Seumois quotes the example of the early Fathers who expounded the faith in the language of Plato, Plotinus and the Stoics. But, surely, this is a precedent which needs to be applied with great caution. The Stoics at least had this affinity with Christianity that they held fast to the idea of an immutable divine law of right and wrong inherent in the universe and there have been Christian thinkers in later centuries who have regarded the Platonick philosophy as the 'old loving nurse' of Christianity without deviating from orthodoxy. Do the philosophies of India afford a similar *praeparatio evangelica* ? It is at least arguable that they do not. It is perhaps characteristic of a work emanating from the Roman Catholic Church that the author does not touch on the subject of the relation of the Old Testament to the New in which the issue is normally focussed for those who own a different allegiance.

+ NOEL CHOTA NAGPUR

Mythos Differenzierung Selbstinterpretation : By Dr. Gerhard Steege ;
Herbert Reich, Evangelischer Verlag, G.m.b.h., Hamburg-Volksdorf.

The lively debate on *Entmythologisierung* (Demythologising) started by an essay of Prof. Bultmann of Marburg towards the end of World War II is the most recent of those controversies with which from time to time Germany stirs the theological world. For English readers a clear account of what is involved is given by Prof. Ian Henderson in his *Myth in the New Testament* ; while the German series of essays on the subject is now available in English in the volume *Kerygma and Myth* (S.P.C.K. 22/6d.).

It is clearly a mistake to dismiss Prof. Bultmann's theory merely as a new form of discredited liberalism. It is rather the venture of one deeply concerned for the proclamation of the Gospel to the multitudes of our own day for whom Christ died, to whom the thought forms of a bygone age have become incomprehensible. It is thus an attempt at that task of 'translation' which always must involve much more than the mere finding of words and phrases to render the original. In lands in which, for instance, the sheep is an unknown animal, how does one make such a phrase as 'The Lamb of God' or the whole rich biblical imagery of shepherds and sheep to become meaningful ? Or in the large areas of Bengal in which no stone is to be found even large enough to fill one's hand nor any hill to break the horizon, how does one speak of a 'rock in a weary land' or of the faith which can remove mountains ? Yet these are but simple examples of the demand made today on the preacher of the Gospel who must distinguish between its vital message and the forms

in which it is clothed. The plea of Dr. Bultmann is that we do not confuse the inescapable 'offence of the cross' with the unnecessary offence of asking modern man to accept mythological forms which mean nothing to him. He has therefore sought to lay bare the essential difference between the thought world of biblical times and that of the man of today. This difference he finds largely in the use of 'myth' which is for ancient man the natural way to express what he understands to be happening to him, so that such explanations as those of demon possession or miracle appear to him the only way to set out what cannot otherwise be explained. On the other hand to modern man 'nature miracles are no longer a means of faith but a problem for faith'.

In the book before us, Dr. Steege has discussed the definition of 'Myth' citing the evidence of a psychologist like Jung as well as of students of religion and systematic theologians. He finds in the mode of man's self consciousness the key to all his understanding of being in general and finds the great difference between the ancient and modern thought worlds in the fact that in the former a man did not in effect distinguish between himself and the external, between the transcendent and the immanent, the personal and the impersonal, while in the latter such distinctions are second nature. He criticizes Dr. Bultmann for not being sufficiently clear on the relation between understanding of the self and of the external world and considers that the existentialist philosophy is inadequate for an investigation of the problems involved.

These problems he discusses from the point of view of the theory of knowledge. While recognizing his main distinction between modern 'differentiating' man and ancient 'identified' man, Steege admits that even today there are many who still think in mythological terms; but for those who do not, he seeks to expound the means by which religious truth comes home to them. Here he begins on familiar ground when he argues that the mere exercise of sensory observation and rational reflection, effective for scientific knowledge of the external world, is not the means by which we lay hold on significant religious knowledge. If it were, then the non-believer who mastered the information provided would be as much at home in the Gospel truth as the believer, and indeed the devil himself is reputed to be an accomplished and highly orthodox theologian! The fact is, however, that religious truth to be appropriated requires an act of acceptance and decision which involves the whole personality, the complete abandonment of the impartial 'spectator' attitude which is necessary for scientific observation. It demands faith. Steege thus argues that the assurance of religious truth lies on the side of the intuitive, subjective aspect of our nature.

From this angle he elaborates his theory of knowledge on the basis of earlier work by Seeberg, and finally offers as an adequate expression for the means of religious knowledge the word 'Autognosis,' signifying knowledge which is not rational so much as similar to that by which we know another person, and which wholly involves the personality of the knower. Such knowledge does not lack objective validity, for it comes to us in the form of an encounter, when the transcendence of God becomes immanent to us, for it is part of the nature of man that he is capable of thus encountering the transcendent.

The writer is clearly entering a field of significant enquiry, which has been opened up by the existentialist philosophers and which, among Christian theologians, Prof. Karl Heim has made peculiarly his own.

But one cannot be satisfied with the many loose ends which this particular volume leaves. Thus one is very doubtful about the complete division he contemplates among men of today between those to whom myth is still meaningful and those to whom it is not. There have been modern 'myths' which challenge that sharp distinction and also query the radical way in which the psychology of men is taken to have developed. Again, when he not only recognizes that religious truth to be effective for me must lay hold on me as a complete person, but also throws the whole weight on the subjective, one must ask how then we are delivered from complete relativity or even illusion. And yet again, with the relativizing of all authority, one is not convinced by the particular means by which the writer still seeks to retain Scriptural authority as the 'norm' of our faith. The question which he has left unanswered is the vital one of historicity, and it is impossible to feel that an interpretation is faithful to the heart of the *Kerygma* which is not much more explicit in its acceptance of the stubborn historical emphasis of the Bible and especially of the fact of the Resurrection to which very little attention is given here.

The men who are wrestling with this problem of 'demythologizing' are asking important questions, but it is not possible to see how the central truth of the great things God has done can be preserved without the fabric of the revelation of that truth which is in Scripture.

W. S.

Christianity and Social Planning. With special reference to the Five-Year Plan of India.

This Bulletin is a first attempt of the 'Christian Institute for the study of Society' to study the first Five-Year Plan of India from the standpoint of Christian faith and conviction. It comprises four articles written by four eminent Christian social thinkers of our country. The first of these deals mainly with the historical background of social planning, or, rather of economic planning in other countries, especially U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. The next article gives a bird's-eye view of India's Five-Year Plan (1951-56). It lays special emphasis on the Community Development Project and the National Extension Services, the two main props of rural planning in the Plan. A brief appraisal of the Plan concludes this article.

Mr. Hector Abhayavardhan presents an admirable article on 'A Socialist Evaluation of the Plan.' The Socialist is a formidable critic of any economic and social planning under a mixed economy. 'At best what the Five-Year Plan seeks to achieve is not the planning of the economy of India but what the Cambridge economist Maurice Hobbs called the 'steering' of the economy in certain directions. Steering is an entirely different matter from planning . . .' Planning, however, is not the mere allocation of budgetary expenditure, but the sum of *production planning*, *financial planning* and *price planning*. The writer shows that the weakest point of India's Five-Year Plan is its financial provision which besides taxation and public borrowing, counts upon foreign aid and deficit financing, the two uncertain and potentially dangerous fair-weather friends of the Plan.

The last essay on 'Christianity and Social Planning' by Rev. J. Russell Chandran, represents the Christian standpoint to Social Planning in general as well as the Christian evaluation of the Five-Year Plan of India. The Bible provides ample material for a definite conception of a

planned society in the history of Israel. 'When we read Leviticus, Chapters 19-25, we cannot miss the fact that the Hebrews had a definite view about the holding of land Justice and Mercy were the dominant themes of the 'eighth century' Prophets. It is the teaching of such Prophets that found expression in the later legal codes of Deuteronomy and Leviticus.' In Primitive Christian Communism one of the underlying ideas was that all men belonged to Christ, because He has died for all. Mr. Reinhold Niebuhr has rightly said that sin makes democracy necessary and the Grace of God makes democracy possible. The primary task of the Christian Church in India is to create democracy, rather than to preserve a democracy which we already have.

'The Christian aim should be to build up cells of true Community living as a means of humanizing the impersonal relationships of modern large societies.'

R. N. D.

Daily Bible Readings : Published for the Church of South India by the Oxford University Press. (Re.1).

This scheme of Daily Bible Readings, recently published by the Synod Liturgy Committee of the C.S.I. is well thought out, and is worthy of a warm welcome.

It is not easy to criticize it in detail without having access to the table of readings for Sundays, which may contain passages which tend to be overlooked in this scheme ;—Jonah, for instance, is relegated to the fourth 'Extra Week', and consequently appears once in about seven years. The table of these 'Extra Weeks' in the Introduction is a little puzzling at first glance, as it is not clearly explained that the Extra Weeks correspond to the number of Sundays between the date in the left-hand column and that on the right.

The compilers have followed an excellent principle in selecting passages from both the Old and New Testaments in such a way as to emphasize the relation of God's mighty acts to the history of His people. In carrying this out the C.S.I. has excluded substantial portions of the Old Testament, but the selection has been wisely made, and there is weighty precedent for excluding the Song of Songs from the Canon!

B. F. P.



Easter

Speaking of Easter, do we not attach more importance nowadays to the act of dying than to death itself ? We are much more concerned with getting over the act of dying than with being victorious over death. Socrates mastered the act of dying ; Christ overcame death as the *εσχατος ἔχθρος* the last enemy (I Cor. 15:24). There is a real difference between the two things. The one is within capacity, the other implies resurrection.—D. Bonhoeffer: *Letters and Papers from Prison*.

Editorial Notices

As announced in Vol. 2, No. 2, the Editor is at present out of the country and hopes to return by October, 1954. Editorial correspondence, however, should continue to be addressed to:

The Editor, *Indian Journal of Theology*, Serampore College, Serampore, where it will be dealt with by the Associate Editor.

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For the technically minded, it may be of interest that included in the Press equipment are Linotypes, Monotypes in three languages, type foundry, six fully automatic presses, folders, four stitching machines, the newest Brehmer book sewing machine, and stereo department.

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